

1994

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Janina Radó
UMass, Amherst

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Recommended Citation

Radó, Janina (1994) "Object Positions, Interpretation and Agreement in Hungarian," *University of Massachusetts Occasional Papers in Linguistics: Vol. 20* , Article 8.
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/umop/vol20/iss1/8>

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Object Positions, Interpretation and Agreement in Hungarian

Janina Radó

UMass, Amherst

1. Introduction*

The focus of this paper will be on sentences of the type exemplified in (1) and (2).

- (1) Pista egy lányt várt.
P. a girl-Acc waited
'Pista waited/was waiting for a girl.'
- (2) Pista várt-a a lányt.
P. waited-Def the girl-Acc
'Pista waited/was waiting for the girl.'

These sentences are both neutral in a discourse interpretational sense: none of the constituents bears special emphasis or is contrastive. However, they also differ in a number of ways. The first and most obvious difference is in terms of word order: the object precedes the verb in (1) but follows it in (2). Further, the object in (2) is definite, whereas the one in (1) is indefinite and non-specific. Finally, the morphology of the verb is different in the two cases: in (2) it shows definiteness or object agreement (glossed as Def), while in (1) it occurs in its non-agreeing form.

The goal of this paper is to account for these properties. It will be claimed that the word order difference between (1) and (2) reflects different semantic interpretation; namely, the post-verbal position is the only neutral position available for specific objects in Hungarian. The pre-verbal object, on the other hand, receives only a non-specific, existential reading, because it is under the scope of the existential quantifier of Diesing (1992).

*This is a slightly modified version of my second general paper. I am grateful to Márta Maleczki for judgements and helpful suggestions; I would also like to thank Viviane Déprez who got me interested in the topic, as well as Elena Benedicto, Christine Bartels, Jeff Runner and Ellen Woolford for discussions of various aspects of this paper. Special thanks go to my committee, Lyn Frazier, Kyle Johnson and John Kingston for their help. All errors are mine.

I will argue that although the basic word order is SOV in Hungarian, in fact, both (1) and (2) come about as the result of movement of the verb as well as of the object. In particular, I propose that the (Accusative) object moves at least as far as [Spec, AgrO], where its Case is checked. It is in this position that the agreement shown in (2) takes place. Assuming, following Chomsky (1992) that a Spec-head relationship is necessary for structural Case licensing, even indefinite objects, which do not show overt morphological agreement with the verb, will have to move to [Spec, AgrO]. An interesting side effect of this movement can be observed in double object constructions: the Dative object is always post-verbal and interpreted as specific. This fact will follow from an analysis whereby the Accusative object always undergoes A-movement to [Spec, AgrO] and the assumption that A-movement over A-positions with lexical content is prohibited -- a version of Relativized Minimality proposed in Rizzi (1990).

The approach taken here utilizes Diesing's (1990, 1992) Mapping Hypothesis, according to which all definite NP's have to move sufficiently high to get out of the scope of the existential quantifier. Indefinite NP's also have the option of moving and thereby receiving a specific (presupposed) interpretation. Thus specificity will be linked to structural positions only, with no reference to Case (contra de Hoop (1992)). Further, I will provide evidence suggesting that at least in Hungarian, movement of the specific NPs is to an adjoined position, as proposed by Diesing. This approach thus contrasts with Runner's (to appear) proposal that specific interpretation is universally licensed through a Spec-head relationship with a functional head. It also requires giving up a potential connection between the presence of definiteness agreement in (2) and the interpretation of the object. Finally, a uniform approach to structural Case licensing will force us to modify Diesing's account, extending the scope of the existential quantifier to AgrOP. This is necessary since, by hypothesis, all Accusative objects must move to [Spec, AgrO] for Case licensing; this movement, however, must still be within the existentially closed-off domain to make non-specific readings of Accusative objects possible.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 provides evidence for the view that the object in (1) is in a pre-verbal object position rather than incorporated, as was previously assumed. Section 3 will examine the semantic properties corresponding to the pre- and post-verbal object positions; it will be shown that NPs in the former are interpreted as non-specific, while the latter are necessarily specific. In section 4 I will give evidence indicating that the post-verbal objects are adjoined; the pre-verbal ones, however, have a much tighter relationship with the verb, presumably a Spec-head configuration. I will argue that this structural difference is responsible for the semantic properties. After reviewing some of the most prominent accounts of specificity in section 5, hopefully it will become clear that the data can be characterized most appropriately by adopting a modified version of Diesing's (1992) Mapping Hypothesis. In particular, in section 6 it will be proposed that existential closure must be over the AgrOP; evidence will come from the fact that in double object constructions, the Dative object must always move outside the scope of the existential quantifier regardless of whether the Accusative object is specific or not. This follows from Relativized Minimality in a way that is similar to Vikner's (1991) account of object shift in Scandinavian, assuming that all Accusative objects must move to [Spec, AgrO] for Case-checking. Further evidence for

2. A pre-verbal position for objects

For the discussion that follows, it will be necessary to distinguish between the 'neutral' word order of the sentence, which is the most unmarked order, typical of sentences occurring at the beginning of the discourse, and the basic or D-structure order of the constituents. The latter has received a lot of discussion in the literature concerning Hungarian. Thus, Horvath (1986), for instance, assumes that Hungarian is underlyingly SVO (cf. also Brody (1990)). É. Kiss (1987, 1990) claims that all constituents of the Hungarian sentence (including the subject) are generated under the V'-node in no particular order, while Marác (1989, 1990) proposed that Hungarian is uniformly head-final, hence SOV. As far as neutral word order of the sentences is concerned, however, typically SVO is taken to be the only possibility; this is established on the basis of sentences like (3) and (4):¹

- (3) János megcáfolta a professzor érveit. (Horvath 1986:23)
J. Part-refuted the professor argument-3Poss-Pl-Acc
'John refuted the professor's arguments.'
- (4) Péter megvárta Marit a klubban. (Marác 1989:23)
P. Part-waited M-Acc the club-in
'Péter waited for Mari at the club.'

It is usually noted that sentences like (5) below with pre-verbal objects are also neutral:²

- (5) Tibor újságot olvasott.
T. paper-Acc read
'Tibor read/was reading a paper.'

Proponents of the SVO order treat these as instances of incorporation of the object into the verb (see also É. Kiss (1993)). Thus (5) above contains a subject and a complex verb only, therefore it has no bearing on the issue of neutral word order.

¹'Part' in the glosses stands for the perfective particle (see section 4.2), 'Poss' for possessive. For the sake of perspicuity, Case endings other than Accusative and Dative will be glossed with the corresponding English prepositions.

²É. Kiss differs in that she assumes that all of the following orders are neutral: OVS, OSV, SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS. Her claim is based on statistical data concerning the word order in 1000 sentences taken from scientific texts and from judgements of native speakers as to which orders seem 'neutral' to them. She does not consider discourse properties legitimate in establishing the neutral order(s), though, thus it is not clear what her informants were judging.

In this section I will provide evidence showing that what I will refer to as the "incorporation approach" (University of Massachusetts Occasional Paper in Verbal Subjects, 2012, Art. 8) sentences. Instead we have to assume that there is also a pre-verbal object position. In section 3 it will be shown that the two object positions give rise to different semantic interpretations.

In support of analyzing (5) as noun incorporation, Marác lists the following observations: (i) the object does not have an article (i.e., it is a bare noun); (ii) the interpretation of the object+verb complex is that of a complex predicate (e.g., 'John is book-reading'); (iii) the object must be adjacent to the verb; and (iv) pre-verbal objects do not cooccur with the perfective particle.

(iv) will be addressed in section 4.2. As for the other observations, I want to suggest that all of these can be given a coherent account without invoking incorporation. This is to be preferred, since as we will see immediately below, preverbal objects are not limited to the type exemplified in (5). First note that the preverbal object does not need to be Accusative:

- (6) a. Laci kenyérre vágyik.
L. bread-onto longs
'Laci is craving bread.'
b. Ildi cicáról álmodik.
I. kitten-about dreams
'Ildi dreams/is dreaming about a kitten/kittens.'

Furthermore, the preverbal object is not necessarily a bare singular noun: the following examples illustrate that it can be a bare plural noun (7), an NP including an indefinite article and adjectives (8), a quantified NP (9), or conjoined NPs (10):

- (7) Tibor képeslapokat nézegetett.
T. picture postcards-Acc looked-at
'Tibor was looking at postcards.'
(8) Tibor egy gyűrött, régi újságot olvasott.
T. a wrinkled old paper-Acc read
'Tibor read/was reading an old wrinkled paper.'
(9) Tibor néhány gyerekkel játszott.
T. some children-with played
'Tibor played/was playing with some children.'
(10) Tibor néhány gyerekkel és egy kutyával játszott.
T. some children-with and a dog-with played
'Tibor played/was playing with some children and a dog.'

(7) is an example of a bare plural noun occurring before the verb; neither number marking nor overt case morphology would be expected if we assume that the object is

indeed incorporated. Furthermore, (8)-(10) show that even what undoubtedly look like full NPs can appear in the pre-verbal position. The crucial example is (10): no analysis of incorporation would allow conjoined NPs to appear here.

Thus it is clear that we must allow full NPs to occur pre-verbally in neutral sentences, at least for the examples (7)-(10) above. I want to suggest that the account given to these should also extend to (5)-(6); in other words, noun incorporation, if it exists at all in Hungarian, is much more limited than it is usually assumed.

A similar point is made in Maleczki (1993). She argues that only a small subset of the bare singular objects passes Mithun's (1984) tests for incorporation. She then goes on to develop a semantic framework in which bare singular objects in Hungarian have a cumulative interpretation, thus (11) is true if any of (12 a-c) holds:

- (11) Tibor kutyát látott.
 T. dog-Acc saw
 'Tibor saw a dog/dogs.'
- (12) a. Tibor egy kutyát látott.
 'Tibor saw a dog.'
 b. Tibor két kutyát látott.
 'Tibor saw two dogs.'
 c. Tibor sok kutyát látott.
 'Tibor saw many dogs.'

This interpretation is fairly close to one in which the verb forms a complex predicate with the incorporated object, yielding 'Tibor was dog-seeing'. As the glosses in (5)-(10) show, however, this is not the only type of reading that occurs with pre-verbal objects; instead, the interpretation of the object+verb depends on the type of NP used as the object. Thus a complex predicate-like reading is not available for (7)-(10).

The last observation having to do with adjacency will be examined in section 4. Notice, however, that the adjacency requirement can follow quite easily from conditions on structural Case assignment, whether it takes place under government inside the VP, or in a Spec-head configuration.

We must therefore conclude that Hungarian allows a pre-verbal object position as well as a post-verbal one. This immediately brings up a set of issues, some of which will be discussed in the rest of this paper.

3. Object interpretations

Now that we have established the existence of a pre-verbal object position, the question arises, why should there be two object positions in a neutral sentence, and how are they distinguished? This section will provide evidence for the claim that the two positions

differ from each other; in particular, they are selective as to what type of NP can fill them.

Let us start by considering the post-verbal objects:

- (13) Imre játszott a gyerekkel.
I. played the child-with
'Imre played/was playing with the child.'
- (14) Pista álmodozott a házról.
P. dreamed the house-about
'Pista dreamed/was dreaming about the house.'

These sentences are of the type usually given to illustrate the neutral SVO order in Hungarian. And in fact, the same object occurring pre-verbally in a neutral sentence is ungrammatical:

- (15) Imre a gyerekkel játszott.³
I. the child-with played
*'Imre played/was playing with the child.'
- (16) Pista a házról álmodozott.
P. the house-about dreamed
*'Pista dreamed/was dreaming about the house.'

Indeed, as the reader might recall, my earlier examples of pre-verbal objects were always indefinite NPs or ones with weak quantifiers:

- (17) a. Tibor egy újságot olvasott. (same as (5))
'Tibor read/was reading a paper.'
- b. Imre néhány könyvet vásárolt.
I. some books-Acc bought
'Imre bought some books.'

Thus it appears that definite NPs are restricted to the post-verbal position for neutral interpretation, whereas indefinites can freely occur pre-verbally. Let us now see whether the converse holds as well, that is, whether indefinites must always be pre-verbal:

³These, as well as the following starred examples, are only bad on a neutral reading. They are perfectly grammatical as instances of focus, however; thus (15) and (16) requires focussing of the object. Following analyses of focus in Brody (1990) and Piñon (1992), I assume that focussing involves leftward movement of both the focussed constituent and the verb, which must immediately follow it. Hence the word order shown in (15)-(16) follows straightforwardly. A non-neutral (topicalized or focussed) reading is available for most of the neutral sentences as well, but that will not concern us here.

- (18) a. Tibor olvasott egy újságot.
 T. read a paper-Acc
 'Tibor read/was reading a (particular) paper.'
 *'Tibor read/was reading some paper or another.'
- b. Imre vásárolt néhány könyvet.
 I. bought some books-Acc
 'Imre bought some (particular) books.'
 *'Imre bought some (random) books.'
- (19) Imre játszott egy gyerekkel.
 I. played a child-with
 'Imre played/was playing with a (particular) child.'
 *'Imre played/was playing with some child or another.'
- (20) Pista álmodozott egy házról.
 P. dreamed a house-about
 'Pista dreamed/was dreaming about a (particular) house.'
 *'Pista dreamed/was dreaming about some house or another.'

The pattern that suggests itself is the following: the objects that occur post-verbally are either definite or indefinite with a specific interpretation.⁴ As indicated by the translations in (17), however, the pre-verbal objects can be non-specific. In fact, that is the only reading available, as the following example demonstrates:

- (21) Hogy kerül ide ez a rengeteg ember?
 'How come there are all these people here?'
- a. Laci ismer néhány lányt. A többiek csak úgy betévedtek.
 L. knows some girls-Acc
 'Laci knows some (of the) girls. The others just wondered in.'
- b. *Laci néhány lányt ismer. A többiek csak úgy betévedtek.
 L. some girls-Acc knows

It seems then that there is a strict semantic constraint on the pre-verbal position; the interpretation of the post-verbal objects may also be similarly constrained, alternatively, it might follow from some Gricean principle: given that the non-specific reading is associated with a particular position, NPs outside that position are taken to be specific by default. There is evidence showing that the former must be correct. Bare nouns, singular or plural, only have the non-specific interpretation, which precludes them occurring in topic (É. Kiss (1987)).⁵ As the following examples show, they are also

⁴The term 'specific' is used here in the sense of 'familiar' (Enç (1991)) or 'presupposed' (Diesing (1992)).

⁵This is not true in English. Note, however, that English bare nouns in topic are interpreted as generic. Following a proposal by Kratzer, Diesing argues that generics are presupposed, hence specific. A similar interpretation is not available for bare nouns in Hungarian.

- (22) Tibor olvasott újságot.
T. read paper-Acc
'Tibor was reading a paper.'
- (23) Imre játszott gyerekkel/gyerekekkel.
I. played child-with/children-with
'Imre was playing with a child/children.'
- (24) Pista álmodozott házról.
P. dreamed house-about
'Pista was dreaming about a house.'

So what we see here is a strict correlation between the position of the object and its interpretation. But why should the post-verbal position correspond to a particular reading? A closer look at the structures in question might shed some light on their semantic properties as well.

4. Object positions

4.1. Pre-verbal objects

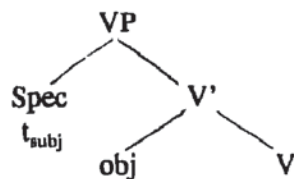
As the following examples show, pre-verbal objects must be adjacent to the verb:⁶

- (25) a. Tibor tegnap egy újságot olvasott.
T. yesterday a paper-Acc read
'Tibor read/was reading a paper yesterday.'
b. *Tibor egy újságot tegnap olvasott.
T. a paper-Acc yesterday read
- (26) a. Imre a kertben egy gyerekkel játszott.
I. the garden-in a child-with played
'Imre played/was playing with a child in the garden.'
b. *Imre egy gyerekkel a kertben játszott.
I. a child-with the garden-in played

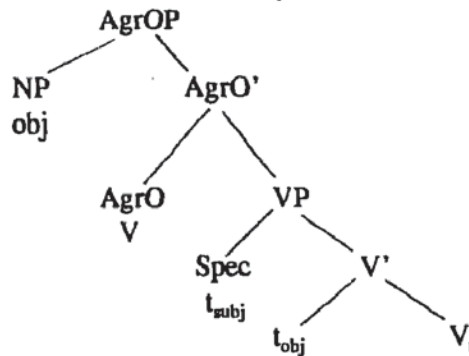
⁶One might argue that the (b) examples are bad because the locative and temporal adjuncts are simply too high to intervene between the verb and the object in its neutral position. As we will see in 4.3, however, we might have reasons to assume that they are not that high after all. Unfortunately, manner adverbs do not provide a suitable test for the position of the object here, since the 'positive' ones are always pre-focal, while the 'negative' ones must occur in focus, both of which are higher than the object and the verb in these examples, cf. Brody (1990).

(at least) the following two structures are compatible with these facts:⁷

(27) a.



b.



Under (27a), both the verb and the object are in their D-structure position, thus their adjacency is not surprising. This is the simpler and therefore more attractive structure, and we might assume that this is indeed the correct one for objects with inherent case, given that they do not have to move to get their Case licensed in a functional projection. (27b) arises if we assume, following standard analyses, that the (Accusative) object must receive structural case from the verb in a Spec-head configuration. As we will see in section 6, this assumption, apart from being motivated by considerations internal to the Minimalist framework of Chomsky (1992), also receives empirical support from the behavior of double objects. The adjacency requirement is then a consequence of the prohibition of adjunction to X' (cf. Chomsky (1992)).

Some remarks about the details of these structures are in order. Hungarian displays a systematic split: functional projections are head-initial but lexical projections are generally head-final. The former seems uncontroversial; it had been argued by e.g., Szabolcsi (1993) for DP, Marác (1989, 1990) for CP and IP, Horvath (1990) for CP, Brody (1990) for F(ocus)P, among others. Proposing a head-initial AgrO therefore seems natural. The latter is not uniformly accepted, though; thus it is clear that lexical projections other than the VP are head-final, and Marác uses this fact to propose a head-final structure for the VP as well; Horvath (1986), on the other hand, assumes that the VP is head-initial (see also Brody (1990)). I am following Marác here assuming that all lexical projections must have the same setting for the headedness parameter. While this is the simpler and therefore more desirable analysis, it is not crucial for my proposal.⁸

⁷I am adopting here the VP-internal subject hypothesis; however, this, or the exact position of the subject is not crucial for the analysis proposed in this paper.

⁸Horvath proposes a V-initial underlying structure only to account for the neutrality of surface SVO orders. Given that SVO is not the only neutral order, as argued here, this is no longer necessary. Note also that É. Kiss generates all arguments post-verbally under a head-initial V', and assumes that the various word orders are the result of scrambling (cf. fn. 2).

4.2. *Objects and perfective aspect*

As already mentioned in section 2, the adjacency of pre-verbal objects to the verb has been used as an argument for the incorporation account. The position of objects and pre-verbal particles seemed to provide further support for this claim. These particles introduce a perfective aspect; in addition they might have adverbial meanings of their own. In neutral sentences they occur immediately preceding the verb, cliticized onto it. Interestingly, the particle does not cooccur with a preverbal object:

- (28) a. Tibor újságot olvasott.
T. paper-Acc read
b. Tibor elolvasta az újságot.
T. Part-read-Def the paper-Acc
'Tibor (has) read the paper.'
c. *Tibor újságot elolvasott.
T. paper-Acc Part-read

The incorporation account offered the following explanation: if the pre-verbal object, as well as the particle, must incorporate into the verb, then we might expect that only one of them can occur in a given construction. This account, however, would not explain why full NPs in pre-verbal position also do not occur together with the particle, since as we have seen in section 2, they cannot be incorporated. Notice also that post-verbal indefinite (specific) objects are fine:⁹

- (29) *Tibor egy újságot elolvasott.
T. a paper-Acc Part-read
'Tibor (has) read some paper or another.'

⁹Another construction in which the particle and the object would not have to compete for the same position is in focussed sentences. Focussing requires that the verb move to a position immediately adjacent to the focussed phrase, stranding the particle; a non-specific indefinite should therefore be able to occur here. However, (i) only has the specific reading:

- (i) Tibor egy újságot olvasott el.
T. a paper-Acc read Part
'It is a (particular) paper that Tibor read (not a book).'
**It is some paper or other that Tibor read.'

This fact can only be due to the presence of the particle, since there is nothing wrong with focussing a non-specific NP:

- (ii) Tibor könyveket vásárolt.
T. books-Acc bought
'It is books that Tibor bought.'

- (30) Tibor elolvasott egy újságot.
 T. Part-read a paper-Acc
 'Tibor (has) read a (particular) paper.'

The ungrammaticality of (28c) and (29) seems to reflect some semantic incompatibility of perfective aspect and a non-specific object. Similar facts have been observed in a number of languages; Travis (1991), Ramchand (1993), and others propose syntactic accounts in which the semantic feature is realized on a syntactic Aspect head, which then allows only specific objects in its Specifier. An analysis along the same lines seems plausible for Hungarian as well; however, the details of it are beyond the scope of the present paper. But it is clear that the relevant semantic feature would be able to block the cooccurrence of bare nouns with the perfective particle without recourse to the incorporation account.

4.3. Post-verbal objects

In contrast to pre-verbal objects, there is no adjacency requirement between the verb and the object following it:

- (31) a. Tibor tegnap olvasta az újságot.
 T. yesterday read-Def the paper-Acc
 b. Tibor olvasta tegnap az újságot.
 T. read-Def yesterday the paper-Acc
 c. Tibor olvasta az újságot tegnap.
 T. read-Def the paper-Acc yesterday
- (32) a. Imre a kertben játszott egy gyerekkel.
 I. the garden-in played a child-with
 b. Imre játszott a kertben egy gyerekkel.
 I. played the garden-in a child-with
 c. Imre játszott egy gyerekkel a kertben.
 I. played a child-with the garden-in

It is clear from the data that the postverbal object can either precede or follow the (post-verbal) locative or temporal. Moreover, in a double object construction, the objects can occur in any order with respect to each other and the adverb:

- (33) a. Kati hozott Palinak tegnap egy könyvet. (Dat Adv Acc)
 K. brought P.-Dat yesterday a book-Acc
 'Yesterday Kati brought Pali a (particular) book.'
- b. Kati hozott Palinak egy könyvet tegnap. (Dat Acc Adv)
 c. Kati hozott egy könyvet tegnap Palinak (Acc Adv Dat)
 d. Kati hozott egy könyvet Palinak tegnap. (Acc Dat Adv)
 e. Kati hozott tegnap egy könyvet Palinak. (Adv Acc Dat)
 f. Kati hozott tegnap Palinak egy könyvet. (Adv Dat Acc)

What this seems to suggest is that both the object and the adverb are adjoined further, they are adjoined to the same projection; the word order possibilities then simply follow from the relative ordering of adjunction. I am assuming that lowering constituents is excluded; adjunction therefore must be to some projection no lower than the VP, if we adopt (27a), or AgrOP, if (27b) is correct.

To summarize the discussion so far: I have argued that Hungarian shows two neutral word orders, SOV and SVO. These word orders result from movement of the object (or of the object and the verb, if (27b) is the right structure). This differs from previous analyses of neutral sentences in Hungarian in two respects: (i) the existence of an alternative neutral word order SOV has not been recognized in the literature (except for É. Kiss, cf. fn. 2); (ii) the surface SVO order is typically analyzed as representing an underlying SVO order. Marácz is an exception; he assumes that the underlying order is SOV and the surface order is the result of the operation of Verb-second to C (Marácz (1989)) or to Infl (Marácz (1990)). His analysis is crucially different from the current one in that for him, it is movement of the verb rather than the object which yields the VO order, and this movement is not sensitive to the semantic properties of the constituents.

Without giving the SOV order the status of an alternative neutral word order, an analysis of the relationship of the position and the interpretation of the object in Hungarian has not been possible, either. There have been proposals concerning other languages, however; that is what I will turn to in the next section.

5. The syntactic representation of specificity

5.1. A Case approach: *de Hoop*

The data that have been reviewed in the previous sections seem to call for an analysis in terms of structural positions. Before looking at strictly structural accounts, however, we need to consider the possibility that both the interpretation and the corresponding positions reflect some deeper relation. One such account has been proposed recently by *de Hoop* (1992), who argues that the different interpretation possibilities are determined by the abstract Case of the object. She distinguishes two kinds of structural objective Case: weak and strong Case. Weak Case is assigned to an NP at D-structure and it cannot be inherited from a trace. Consequently, NPs with weak Case must stay in their D-structure positions. These NPs receive a weak reading, basically they are interpreted as part of the predicate. Strong Case, on the other hand, is assigned at S-structure and is licensed even if the NP undergoes movement. NPs with a strong Case have a strong (referential, partitive, generic or generic collective) reading. The empirical basis for this proposal comes from languages in which 'strong' and 'weak' Case corresponds to different morphological Cases (Finnish, Turkish, Greenlandic Eskimo) and from the fact that in Germanic languages scrambled objects have only the strong reading. Turning to Hungarian, *de Hoop* follows Szabolcsi (1986) in analyzing bare noun objects as incorporated, pointing out that they do not cooccur with the perfective particle. We have seen in section 4.2 that this conclusion is not well-motivated. Instead, let us consider a

possible extension of her analysis in light of the fact that there are two object positions.

De Hoop's analysis equates weak, existential readings with weak Case. Applying her hypothesis to the Hungarian facts would yield the following: pre-verbal objects receive weak Case, therefore they must still be in their D-structure position. Post-verbal objects, on the other hand, have strong Case and are allowed to move. This analysis is problematic in several respects. First, NPs with strong Case are not barred from their D-structure position in de Hoop's theory; however, as we have seen, in Hungarian definite NPs cannot occur pre-verbally and indefinite NPs before the verb are always interpreted as non-specific. Second, de Hoop's analysis is designed to account for two different abstract objective Cases, which in some languages have morphological correlates. What we find in Hungarian, however, is a systematic interpretational difference across several morphological Cases, between pre-verbal and post-verbal objects. Thus it seems that if abstract Case is responsible for the semantics of objects, it is in no way reflected in the morphology. Finally, at least some of the Cases the various object NPs bear appear to be lexical (i.e., theta-related) -- de Hoop's account, however, crucially depends on the assumption that we are dealing with structural Cases here.

5.2. *An adjunction approach: Diesing*

Diesing (1990, 1992) represents the other extreme in the specificity literature: she offers an account of the syntax and semantics of specific and non-specific NPs in purely structural terms. She adopts the Kamp-Heim analysis of tripartite structures for sentences (Heim (1982)); furthermore, she puts forth the Mapping Hypothesis, which states that material inside the VP is under the scope of an existential quantifier, and it gets mapped into the nuclear scope. By contrast, VP-external (=IP) material is mapped into the restrictor. She further follows Heim (1982) by treating indefinites as variables; those indefinite NPs which are inside the VP at the level of (initial) semantic interpretation are caught by existential closure and receive a non-specific interpretation. The ones outside the VP end up in the restrictor, hence their presupposed (=specific) interpretation.

Diesing proposes that specific interpretation is not related to any single position; in order to escape the existential closure it is sufficient for the NP to be adjoined higher than the scope of the existential quantifier. In her theory, specific subjects are in [Spec,IP] while specific objects are VP-adjoined. Thus she can account for both the different behavior of the subjects of stage-level vs. individual-level predicates (cf. Kratzer (1989)) and the Germanic scrambling facts mentioned in 5.1 above.

The facts we observed in section 4 suggest an analysis fairly similar to Diesing's. The only significant difference is the scope of the existential quantifier: by adopting (27b) as the correct structure for the position of Accusative objects we are committed to extending the existential closure to the entire AgrOP. This modification seems to be in the spirit of Diesing's original proposal, which was developed before the 'explosion' of functional categories in IP; it also helps preserve the assumption that Accusative is uniformly licensed in [Spec,AgrO]. In section 6, I will provide empirical evidence

suggesting that this extension is necessary. The same modification has recently been proposed by Lin (1993) to provide an analysis for the object expletive *ta* in Chinese. He gives evidence that *ta* is in [Spec, AgrO]; however, it must also be in the scope of the existential quantifier, since it induces the definiteness effect: the object coindexed with the expletive must be non-specific.

5.3. *A functional projections approach: Runner*

Runner (this volume) is an attempt to combine the previous two approaches. He observes that cross-linguistically, specific readings of NPs tend to correlate with Case-distinctions, agreement distinctions, or word order differences. He offers an account of specific reading in terms of licensing: a functional head (AgrO), which is itself anaphorically related to the discourse, can license an anaphoric (presupposed, specific) reading for the NP occupying its Spec. This Spec-head configuration also gives rise to Case licensing, and in some languages, agreement.

Runner suggests that his theory accounts for the Hungarian data in a straightforward fashion. He assumes that the underlying word order is OV, and the specific reading of the object is possible when the verb has moved to AgrO, which yields the VO order. Movement of the verb is necessary to license the AgrO projection in the syntax; this is needed so that the object can raise to its Spec at LF and receive specific interpretation through Spec-head agreement. As support for the existence of AgrO in Hungarian, he points out the fact that verbs show agreement with their definite Accusative objects.

Having the various properties of specific objects converge in one position makes Runner's proposal very attractive. It is not entirely clear, though, how it accounts for the word order possibilities in (32)-(33). More importantly, however, it seems to predict that only one internal argument of the verb can participate in the specific/non-specific alternation.¹⁰ It is therefore interesting to see whether the behavior of double objects confirms this prediction. This is the topic of the next section.

6. Double object constructions

Hungarian allows double object constructions; in fact, as we have seen in section 4.3, both objects can occur post-verbally (cf. (33)). (34) provides the full paradigm:

- (34) a. Laci egy könyvet adott egy lánynak. (same as (33))
 L. a book-Acc gave a girl-Dat
 'Laci gave a book to a (particular) girl.'
 *'Laci gave a book to a (random) girl.'

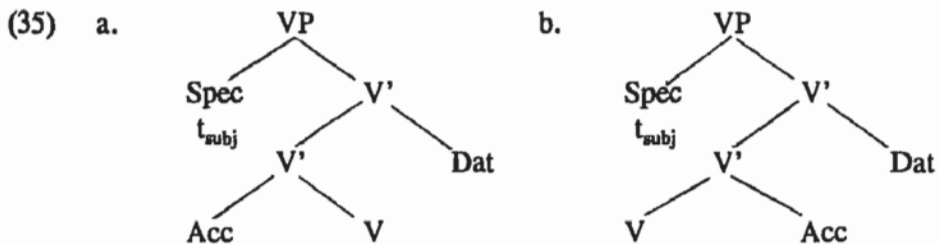
¹⁰In fact, it makes the even stronger prediction that only objects with structural Case have the option of acquiring a specific interpretation.

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- b. *Laci egy könyvet egy lánynak adott.
L. a book-Acc a girl-Dat gave
- c. *Laci egy lánynak egy könyvet adott.
L. a girl-Dat a book-Acc gave
- d. *Laci egy lánynak adott egy könyvet.
L. a girl-Dat gave a book-Acc
- e. Laci adott egy könyvet egy lánynak.
L. gave a book-Acc a girl-Dat
- f. Laci adott egy lánynak egy könyvet
L. gave a girl-Dat a book-Acc
'Laci gave a (particular) book to a (particular) girl.'
'*Laci gave a (particular) book to some girl or another.'

(34a) is as expected under the current account: it is possible to leave one object in the pre-verbal position. It is surprising, however, that this option is only available for the Accusative object, as shown by (34d). In fact, the Dative cannot occur before the verb in a double object construction either when the Accusative is post-verbal or together with a pre-verbal Accusative.

A simple-minded approach would say at this point that we are simply wrong about assuming that the VP is head-final; (34a) then represents the basic order within the VP with the Dative being base-generated after the verb, as in (35).



(35a) is non-standard in that the VP is not uniformly branching with respect to the two objects. The assumption underlying (35b), on the other hand, is that lexical categories are not uniformly headed after all; the VP is head-initial while other lexical projections are head-final. Both of these proposals are rather unattractive, and upon closer inspection of the data in (34) they also turn out to be inadequate. Notice that in all of the examples above the Dative is necessarily interpreted as specific. Moreover, bare nouns, which must be non-specific, are excluded here:

- (36) *Laci egy könyvet adott lányoknak.
L. a book-Acc gave girls-Dat
'Laci gave girls a book.'

This is not due to some special property of the Dative; we do not find a comparable effect when the Dative is the only object of the verb:

(37) Anna néhány gyereknek segített.

A. some child-Dat helped

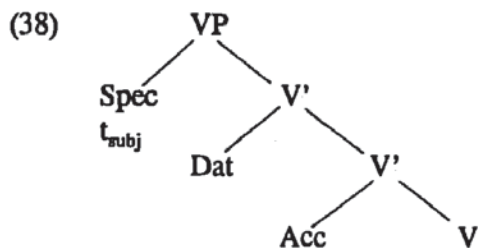
'Anna helped/was helping some children.'

University of Massachusetts Occasional Papers in Linguistics, Vol. 20 [1994], Art. 8

Given the structures in (35), the specific reading cannot be due to the position of the Dative, either. First, neither (35a) nor (35b) provides a distinguished, Specifier-like position for the Dative, which could account for the interpretation. Does Diesing's analysis in terms of scope of existential quantification offer an explanation here? In (35a) it is possible only if the existential closure is over the lowest V'; but then the subject could never be low enough to be interpreted as non-specific, which is certainly the wrong prediction. For (35b), we must assume that the Accusative object moves leftwards to yield the word order of (34a); following standard assumptions it would have to move to a position higher than the original one, thus higher than the Dative. This excludes the possibility that the Accusative, but not the Dative, falls under existential closure.¹¹

As an alternative, let us assume that the Dative in (34a) is in the post-verbal adjoined position. Clearly, it must be an option: the relative order of the (adjoined) Accusative and the Dative in (34e) is only possible if the Dative is adjoined as well; what I am suggesting here is that this is in fact the only possibility. But why should that be the case? Why is movement of the Dative outside the VP (or AgrOP) always necessary in a double object construction?

I would like to propose that this is a side-effect of the movement of Accusative objects to [Spec,AgrO]. Let us assume that the structure of the VP is as given in (38).



What is crucial here is that the Dative is generated higher than the Accusative. If structural Case is checked in a Spec-head relation, then the Accusative object will have to move to [Spec,AgrO] for Case-checking. This explains the ungrammaticality of (34c), where the Accusative stayed in situ. Raising to [Spec,AgrO], however, requires moving over the Dative which is in an A-position. Let us assume that it is the movement of the Accusative over the Dative that makes (34b,d) ungrammatical. This is reminiscent of the pattern of object shift in Scandinavian double object constructions. Vikner (1991) observes that in Danish and Icelandic the VP-internal order of the Accusative and the

¹¹Unless we adopt Borer's (this volume) proposal that existential closure has its own projection. This proposal is quite controversial, however.

Dative may not be changed by object shift. In particular, the Dative object can be shifted alone; however, if the Accusative object is moved, the Dative must move as well. In other words, the Accusative cannot move over a Dative inside the VP:

- (39) a. Pétur sýndi oft Maríu bókina. (Icelandic)
 P. showed often M-Dat book-Acc
 b. Pétur sýndi Maríu oft bókina.
 c. *Pétur sýndi bókina oft Maríu.
 d. Pétur sýndi Maríu bókina oft.

Vikner proposes an account in the framework of Relativized Minimality (Rizzi (1990)). First, he shows that object shift has the properties of A-movement rather than A'-movement. When the Accusative is shifted, it must be able to antecedent-govern its trace. The intervening Dative, by virtue of being in an A-position, acts a closer potential governor, blocking proper government of the trace, thus the sentence is ungrammatical. When the Dative is shifted as well, its trace does not count as a closer potential governor any more, presumably simply because it is not lexical.

The extension of this proposal to Hungarian is quite straightforward. The Accusative object must move to [Spec,AgrO] to get its Case licensed. Following standard analyses, this is A-movement, so we expect an intervening lexical NP in an argument position to block proper government. This is precisely what makes (34b,d) ungrammatical. The crucial difference between Vikner's facts and the Hungarian data is that Hungarian does not have the equivalent of object shift available for Datives. Thus the Dative must move out of the way, but it can only undergo A'-movement, which results in adjoining it to AgrOP. But then it is no longer under the scope of the existential quantifier, therefore it can only be specific.

Notice, incidentally, that the subject never blocks antecedent government of the Accusative trace. I have been implicitly assuming that in Hungarian it moves out of the VP, presumably to [Spec,AgrS] (cf. fn. 5). Vikner suggests that the same holds in Scandinavian. This serves as a further argument in favor of the modification of Rizzi's Relativized Minimality, namely, that only lexical NPs count as a closer potential governor for proper government of the trace. If traces blocked antecedent government as well, then given the VP-internal subject hypothesis, object shift or movement of the object to [Spec,AgrO] would never be possible, because of the intervening subject trace.

The present analysis crucially assumes movement of all Accusative objects to [Spec,AgrO]. This is not very controversial; it has been proposed e.g., by Chomsky (1992) to provide a uniform approach to structural Case checking. Recall, however, that Runner argues for the AgrOP being the projection licensing the specific reading, therefore being crucially outside the existentially closed-off portion of the tree. His argument comes from the presence of object (definiteness) agreement. If his analysis is correct, we must assume that Accusative assignment is divorced from agreement. Thus one possibility might be that the functional projection licensing Accusative is not AgrO.

Alternatively, Accusative could be licensed in two positions, one linked to agreement and giving a specific interpretation, the other not. Either of these possibilities would call into question the original motivation for proposing AgrO as a projection. I would like to pursue a different line, arguing that specificity of the object and definiteness agreement are virtually unrelated in Hungarian; but this makes it necessary to examine definiteness agreement more closely.

7. Agreement

Hungarian exhibits what is usually called objective or definiteness agreement (cf. Farkas (1986), Marácz (1989)):

- (40) the verb bears an agreement morpheme if its Accusative object is
- a. a 3rd person pronoun
Pista lát-ja őt /őket.
P. sees-Def him/her /them
 - b. a proper name
Pista lát-ja Katit.
P. sees-Def K.-Acc
 - c. an NP with a definite article
Pista lát-ja a lányt.
P. sees-Def the girl-Acc
 - d. a possessive NP
Pista lát-ja egy barát-ját.
P. sees-Def a friend-3Poss-Sg-Acc
 - e. an NP with certain quantifiers (forms with 'which' or the superlative ending)
Pista lát-ja valamelyik /mindegyik lányt.
P. sees-Def some(spec.)/each girl-Acc
 - f. a reflexive
Pista lát-ja magát
P. sees-Def self-3Sg-Acc
(én) lát-om magamat
I see-Def self-1Sg-Acc

These examples make it clear that the 'agreement' morpheme depends on the +definite nature of the Accusative object; furthermore, this is a grammaticalized notion of 'definite': it depends on morphological form rather than interpretation. The agreement morpheme occurs in all tenses and moods, it has the same form regardless of the number of the object.^{12,13} This form contrasts with the non-agreeing form of the verb:

¹²The presence of the agreement licenses object pro-drop if the object is singular, but not when it is plural:

(i) Pista lát-ja.
P. sees-Def
'Pista sees him/her/*them.'

- (41) the verb does not have an (overt) agreement morpheme if
- a. it has an Accusative object different from those listed in (40)

Pista lát engem/téged/mindenkit/sok lányt
P. sees me/you-Acc/everybody-Acc/many girls-Acc
 - b. it has a non-Accusative object

Pista veszekszik a lánnyal.
P. fights the girl-with

- (42) Pista lát/veszekszik.
P. sees/fights

(42) shows that the non-agreeing form has the same morphology as the intransitive.

It is standardly assumed that in order for the agreement to take place, the object and the verb must be in the Spec and head of AgrO, respectively. The presence of agreement with at least certain Accusative objects then suggests that Hungarian has an AgrO projection. But do we have to assume that all Accusative objects move to AgrO? Is it possible that the definite Accusatives trigger agreement in their post-verbal position?¹⁴ I want to argue that it is not the case. Notice first that the range of Accusative objects that occur post-verbally is larger than the ones that trigger overt morphological agreement; in particular, specific indefinites occur after the verb but with the non-agreeing form of the verb, cf. (41a). This is unexpected if the post-verbal position is the one where agreement is licensed. Second, agreement is triggered by Accusative objects only, thus it is linked to a particular Case; it is natural to capture this connection in the usual way, by saying that Accusative Case and definiteness agreement are licensed in the same functional projection. But if definite objects get their Case and agreement licensed in their post-verbal position, then there must be another Case position for pre-verbal Accusative objects, thus the uniformity of Accusative licensing is lost. This is undesirable given that the Accusatives licensed in the two positions are morphologically identical. We would then have to face a problem already mentioned in connection with de Hoop's proposal: if Case is licensed in the same position as specificity, then in fact all non-Nominative Cases will need to be licensed in two different ways. By dissociating Case from specificity, however, the motivation for a functional projection licensing specificity has disappeared. Notice finally, that even without these problems the functional projections approach would run into considerable difficulty trying

¹³It can be argued that the agreement morpheme is a clitic. This has no effect on the proposal developed here, since clitics are usually analyzed as agreement heads, therefore they are in AgrO as well (cf., for instance, Borer (1984), Kayne (1989)).

¹⁴There are at least two ways to think about it: we could assume that post-verbal objects are in the Specifier of some functional projection. This is quite unlikely, however, given that Hungarian only has leftward specifiers; also, it would leave the word order facts of (32)-(33) unexplained. The other possibility is Runner's proposal, according to which the post-verbal objects are still in their D-structural position in the syntax; they undergo movement to [Spec,AgrO] at LF. The Spec-head relationship with AgrO could serve to license the agreement. As I will argue below, this is not a viable alternative, either.

to account for the double object construction in (34). Either multiple functional projections must be postulated to accommodate all specific arguments, or we must allow for a different licensing mechanism for the second specific object. This would seriously undermine the original proposal of Spec-head licensing.¹⁵

In contrast, the approach taken here preserves the connection between agreement and Case assignment, but does not relate it to the specificity issue. Given that licensing of the Accusative takes place in AgrO, agreement is possible with the appropriate type of objects. It also follows that we do not find agreement with non-Accusatives, which never move through AgrO. As far as the lack of agreement with indefinites is concerned, we might assume that agreement is only activated by a certain morphological feature on the NP; however, it could also be argued that the non-agreeing verb forms have an agreement morpheme as well, which happens to be null. At the present these two hypotheses are indistinguishable. The specific interpretation, on the other hand, is the result of the NP moving out of the scope of the existential quantifier. This is necessary for definite NPs, otherwise they would not be interpretable; it is also an option for the indefinites, but one that is not related to passing through [Spec,AgrO] or triggering agreement.

8. Conclusion

In this paper I have given an account for the position of objects in neutral sentences in Hungarian. I have shown that the two positions, namely, pre-verbal vs. post-verbal correlate with two distinct interpretations, non-specific and specific, respectively. Using Diesing's theory as well as word order facts I have argued that the position of the post-verbal object is high enough to be outside the scope of the existential quantifier, presumably adjoined to AgrOP. The preverbal object, however, is within the existentially closed-off domain. Furthermore, I have presented evidence suggesting that even pre-verbal Accusative objects move to [SpecAgrO] for Case checking. This movement is blocked if there is a lexical NP in an argument position in the path of the Accusative. Therefore movement of the Accusative object to [Spec,AgrO] in double object constructions necessarily triggers the movement of the (higher) Dative object as well, resulting in a configuration where the Dative will always be interpreted as specific. This is similar to the facts discussed by Vikner (1991) in connection with object shift in Scandinavian double object constructions.

I have also argued that Runner's functional projection approach, and in fact any approach which depends on licensing specific interpretation in a Spec-head relation, is incapable of accounting for the Hungarian data. It was further shown that de Hoop's Case theory does not provide an adequate explanation, either. Moreover, neither approach can account for the occurrence of more than one specific internal argument,

¹⁵Moreover, the different specifiers (and, presumably, the corresponding heads) must be unselective as to the type of object that fills them, to account for both the Accusative-Dative and the Dative-Accusative orders.

either. Instead, I presented an analysis in purely structural terms, using Diesing's Mapping Hypothesis. Crucially, however, I proposed that the scope of the existential quantifier must be extended to the entire AgrOP.

Finally, the surface SVO order in neutral sentences was shown to be linked to the 'specific' reading of the object. This follows from independent principles given the analysis presented here. Hence the grammar of Hungarian can be simplified by assuming that all lexical categories are head-final.

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Janina Radó
 Department of Linguistics
 South College
 University of Massachusetts
 Amherst, MA 01003

jrado@linguist.umass.edu